



- B. Share your survey answers with a partner and discuss what you think the reading will be about. Then circle the number of the statement below which matches your prediction.
1. The passage will describe critical reading and what critical readers do.
 2. The passage will explain critical reading and when critical readers use it.
 3. The passage will list the reasons critical reading is important and when critical reading is used.
- C. Now read the passage to see if your prediction is correct. Try to read as quickly as you can. Do not stop to look up words in your dictionary.

Reading 2


What Is Critical Reading?

Critical reading does not mean criticizing or finding mistakes in a text or an article. Critical reading means noticing techniques that writers use to convince readers to accept ideas or information.  Readers who recognize these techniques can evaluate a reading selection more easily.  Critical reading is a skill used in everyday life. For example, in college, choosing an answer on a multiple choice test requires critical reading skills. Purchasing a product online is another example of a task that requires critical reading skills.

Critical readers

Critical readers do not automatically believe that everything they read is true. They ask themselves questions about the text. For example, they might ask if the author is well-known. They might ask if the author is an expert on the subject. They also ask what the author's purpose is for writing. Is it to present facts or statistics, or is it to persuade or convince the reader to believe something? In addition, critical readers are aware of the author's approach. Is the information presented in an objective or neutral way? Does the writer reveal a subjective (positive or negative) attitude toward the subject?

Identifying and evaluating the main idea

 Critical reading means analyzing ideas and then deciding whether to accept them, reject them, or think about them further. In order to analyze ideas, good

readers first identify the main idea. Finding the main idea is key to understanding the writer's argument. Good readers skim the reading and find the main idea before reading the entire article. This results in faster and more effective reading.

Critical readers also evaluate the main idea. They do this by asking questions. Does the main idea seem important? Does it seem logical? Does it allow for other viewpoints? Does the author insist that this viewpoint is the only valid one? If the main idea doesn't seem important or logical, critical readers pay close attention to the details the author uses to support it.

Examining support for the main idea

Paying close attention to the details means examining the evidence the author uses to support the main idea. Evidence may include facts, statistics, examples, experience, and opinions. The critical reader asks two key questions. The first is, "Is the evidence adequate?" The reader decides whether the author has provided enough support for the main idea. One or two examples are usually not enough to support a viewpoint. If the support is inadequate, the critical reader will not accept the author's opinion as true.

The second key question is, "Does the evidence seem accurate?" The reader considers the source of the information. The reader also considers the methods that were used to collect the facts. If the source is questionable, the support may also be questionable. If the method is unreliable, the facts may be unreliable as well.

Analyzing the presentation of evidence

Critical reading also requires the reader to recognize errors in the author's thinking. Errors weaken the author's support and, thus, the author's ideas. For example, the author may use **circular reasoning**. This is simply repeating the main idea in different words without adding any reasons or evidence to support the idea. The author may also try to distract the reader with a **red herring**. A *red herring* is an idea or statement that distracts or leads the reader away from the issue. Finally, the author may make a **hasty generalization**. This

means the author bases a conclusion on very little evidence or support.

Putting it all together

Critical readers understand both *what* a text says and *how* it says it. Critical reading, then, means three things. It means recognizing the techniques authors use to convince the reader to accept the ideas as presented. It means evaluating the text in light of these techniques. It also means deciding whether to accept or reject the text, or to gather more information before making a decision.

Key Concept Words

circular reasoning - (n.) repetition of the same idea using different words

critical reading - (n.) analytical reading which leads to making a decision

hasty generalization - (n.) a rapidly drawn, often inaccurate, conclusion

red herring - (n.) something used as a distraction

Glossed Words

distract - (v.) draw attention away from something; **evidence** - (n.) something helpful in coming to a conclusion; **in light of** - (idiom) in consideration of; **text** - (n.) main part of a written work;

viewpoint - (n.) an attitude or opinion

Summarizing

ACTIVITY 13

Share What You Read

- A. Use two or three sentences to tell your partner what you thought the reading was about. Then listen to your partner's sentences. Next, read the following statements and circle the number of the statement that best summarizes the reading.
1. Critical reading is important for determining whether the evidence is adequate and accurate when looking at facts, statistics, and opinions.
 2. Critical reading means understanding the author's argument, evaluating the support, and making a decision about the information.
 3. Critical reading means reading to determine what is wrong with a text that tries to persuade or convince the reader to accept a viewpoint.
- B. Did you choose statement 2? If you chose a different answer, go back and review your survey answers. Try to determine why they lead to summary statement 2.